



Brown Bros.

Steam Pumpers Pulled by Horses were used by fire departments from the mid-1800's to the early 1900's. At the time, they were a major improvement over the hand pumps formerly used.

The USFA serves as an information center for the nation's fire departments and develops new fire prevention and control techniques for use by local departments. It also operates the National Academy for Fire Prevention and Control in Washington, D.C. The academy develops training programs for fire fighters and others who work in the field of fire prevention and control.

Since the 1960's, U.S. fire departments have been faced with drastic increases in arson. Between the mid-1960's and 1977, the arson rate increased about 300 per cent. In efforts to reduce the problem, some fire departments have hired more arson investigators and pushed for stronger laws against arson.

False alarms have also become a serious problem. In some U.S. cities, a third or more of all alarms received by the fire department are false. Some departments have removed alarm boxes from areas with a long record of false alarms. Others send fewer companies to answer alarms during peak false alarm periods.

A number of paid fire departments began to hire women as fire fighters during the 1970's. Women had served in volunteer fire departments since the 1800's but were not admitted into any paid departments until the 1970's.

Careers

The requirements for becoming a paid fire fighter vary among fire departments. In general, an applicant must be at least 19 years old and in excellent physical condition. An applicant must also have a high school education and pass a written test.

After being accepted by a fire department, a proba-

tionary fire fighter takes a training program that lasts one to three months. The program covers such subjects as fire behavior, fire-fighting tactics and strategy, and forcible entry techniques. After the probationary period, a fire fighter may receive specialized training in such areas as rescue work, fire prevention, arson investigation, or emergency medical care.

Many fire departments provide continuing education programs for fire fighters. In addition, nearly 400 community colleges in the United States offer courses in subjects related to fire protection.

JAMES W. SMITH

Originally reviewed by the UNITED STATES FIRE ADMINISTRATION

Related Articles in WORLD BOOK include:

Arson	Forestry (Fire)
Fire	Insurance (Fire Insurance)
Fire Drill	Paramedic
Fire Extinguisher	Rescue
Fire Prevention	Safety (Burns and Scalds)
Fireproofing	Smoke Detector

Outline

- I. The Work of a Fire Department
 - A. Fire Fighting
 - B. Emergency Rescue Operations
 - C. Fire Prevention and Fire Safety
- II. Fire Department Equipment
 - A. Communication Systems
 - B. Fire Trucks
 - C. Special Fire Vehicles
 - D. Protective Clothing
- III. Kinds of Fire Departments
 - A. Volunteer Departments
 - B. Paid Departments
 - C. Special-Purpose Departments
- IV. History
- V. Careers